

amendment, "That, in the opinion of the architects, artists, and amateurs present, sufficient evidence has not been laid before the public to warrant the removal of the national collection from a central position in the metropolis."

Mr. Fomas, V.P. strongly expressed his opinion that the National Gallery should be made as freely accessible to all classes as possible, due regard being had to the preservation of the pictures. He knew nothing of the intentions of the Government. He thought the Institute should pay every attention to the question, and seek the co-operation of other societies, so that an efficient force might be exerted in favour of whatever might be deemed the proper course.

Mr. J. Bell, M.P. said he had great reason to believe that the Government had determined upon a plan which it might require all the exertions, and perhaps more than the power, of the Institute to alter. In the evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, he saw no reason given for the removal, except that fewer persons would visit the Gallery, an argument which the Institute could only apply in a very different way.

The Chairman, in answer to a question on the subject, stated that, whatever resolution might be passed, it would only bind the members present, and not the Institute as a body. He trusted it would not be supposed that the Government desired to exclude any class from the examination and study of works of art; or that such distinguished men as Sir C. Eastlake and Mr. Faraday could entertain such an idea. Though himself an advocate for the change of site, he trusted his own labours to promote the free admission of the public to our national monuments, would relieve him from any such imputation.

Mr. C. H. Smith thanked the meeting for the interest they had taken in a subject which he had brought forward without any such expectation; and simply because he believed that the site of St. Martin's Workhouse might soon become available. Whether for the enlargement of the National Gallery, for the accommodation of learned and scientific bodies, or otherwise, he hoped that site would be secured for public purposes.

The amendment was then put, and carried by the votes of the Fellows of the Institute.

It was moved by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Mr. Bell, M.P. and carried, "That the resolution be referred to the Council, to take such steps in furtherance of it as may be proper."

In reply to an inquiry as to the manner in which the opinion of the Institute at large could be elicited, the Honorary Secretaries stated that a special meeting might be called on the requisition of eight Fellows.

Without finding the expediency of removing the pictures to Old Brompton actually proved by the evidence before the public, we do not participate in the objection to the proposed removal held by some of the speakers, and are disposed to view with satisfaction the comprehensive scheme contemplated by the Royal Commissioners of 1851.

The Commissioners have just now issued their second report, wherein (showing that the probable amount which will remain at their disposal is 173,298*l.*), they set forth the terms on which they, with the concurrence of Go-

vernment, have purchased the land in Kensington and Brompton, and say,—

"The question of the apportionment of the ground among the different institutions to be erected upon it, or of its division between the Government and the Royal Commission, as already spoken of, must obviously be left for future arrangement. It appears to us, however, that it would be desirable that the new National Gallery, if placed in this locality, should occupy the advantageous and more elevated site fronting Hyde-park, on the Gore House estate, while an institution like the Commercial Museum or Museum of Manufactures, already suggested by us, might be established on the corresponding site fronting the Brompton-road, at the further end of the property; the central portion containing a building in which the different societies might procure that juxtaposition, the means of effecting which, as we have before mentioned, they have been for several years considering; while the two sides might be devoted to the departments of practical art and practical science."

The Commissioners are acting on the conviction, that all sciences and all arts have only one end—the promotion of the happiness of mankind—and that they cannot perfectly obtain that end without combination and unity.

A SANITARY AND FIRE-PROOF FLOOR-CEILING GIVING THE ARCHITECT NO WORK AT ALL.

THE floor construction described by Mr. W. Bridges Adams, in your late number, reducing the architect's work to a single casting, appears sound in principle, if confined to floors (not roofs); and did anything call for floors of 200 feet span, or render them advantageous, I do not think I should make them differing much from that design in any particular, except making the meshes triangular, to get the doubled security of ties in three directions instead of two, and giving the turn-stile pieces six arms. The whole problem, however, is purely one of curiosity. There is no present requirement, and I can conceive of no future one, that may require floors of even 50 feet span. For admitting the inconvenience, and, indeed, barbarism (with our science and resources) of pillars anywhere between the speakers and hearers, in churches, lecture-rooms, and theatres,—yet, as the utmost extent the voice can reach is included within a circle of 150 feet diameter, no auditory can in reason be extended beyond a figure inscribed in such a circle. Now, a floor over any place can only be motivated by another room being above it: otherwise we should want, not a floor-ceiling, but a roof-ceiling. Our auditory, then, is supposed to have a room over it, and, therefore, can only be lighted from side windows. But a room requires, to get light enough in this manner, a height at the very least two-thirds of its width. Therefore, before it is worth while to make a floor of 150 feet span, we must find it worth while to mount 100 feet of stairs to get on this floor. This cannot be the case until the ground is worth very many times more than it has ever yet been, in any city, ancient or modern. If we take 30 or 40 feet as the utmost height worth ascending to a "one-pair" floor, then 40 or 50 will be the utmost span worth covering in this manner,—leaving taste out of the question.

But, moreover, even rooms of these widths, or of 30 feet, or even 20, must, to get light enough from the sides, be high enough to admit arched bearers, the cheapest and best spanners of any space. Therefore, there can be no rational motive for the omission of arches in any ceiling beyond the scale of our commonest domestic ones; in other words, no motive for a piece of floor-ceiling ever wider than those in ordinary houses. I may go further, and say that none can rationally occur in public buildings so wide even as these, because there is always, owing to the height, opportunity for arched bearers between every window, and, therefore, decidedly nearer together than the walls of domestic rooms.

As I am reasoning only of what admits

reason—of the architecture of men, not that of monkeys—of course I take for granted that the levelness of a floor-ceiling would never be imitated; that this inherent and hardly conquerable element of ugliness would prevent its ever being made wantonly, or allowed to subtend a larger angle to the eye than is necessary in short, that taste, no less than engineering economy, would always confine it to the least possible span.

It is otherwise with a roof or roof-ceiling. Here the engineering requirements not only involve no necessary ugliness, but would, in any material, if honestly thought out, necessitate much positive beauty. I do not think even—could succeed in making a good roof ugly or mean. To do so he was obliged to throw reason and the structural requirements overboard. A rational roof is unavoidably beautiful, and hence its span might be enlarged for æsthetic considerations beyond what the utilitarian ones strictly called for. Pillarless roofs on the scale Mr. Adams mentions (one, for instance, housing the Crystal Palace, like a model in a glass shade) would doubtless, if treated without very egregious absurdity, have a certain grandeur, just enough to justify the incurring some shillings per cent. extra to dispense with pillars. And I have elsewhere shown how easily this might be done (at certainly no greater expense than a pillared baby-house à la Hyde-park), by a construction which is so far similar to the floor of Mr. Adams as to have the net-like substratum of ties in two directions; but not depressed into a level plane, which would (as that memorable warning has proved) utterly preclude all grandeur, let the scale be what it may. I only refer to this project to show that the net I am about to describe is not borrowed from that of Mr. Adams, which some, I believe, would regard as a heinous sin.

Otherwise, the proposal to make one contrivance serve for a floor or a roof, simply recalls the umbrella-telescope class of work-wasters; but without their ingenuity. To see one thing combine the functions of a clock and an almanac, or a compass and a nutmeg-grater, excites pity at the amount of irretrievable thought and ingenuity perverted; but to see one design pretend to answer (for it never can answer) those of a floor and a roof, only excites laughter at the astounding assurance of undertaking such things at all without even seeing that they are two things; and that after all possible narrowing of his office, an architect must still somehow manage to get two ideas before he can design them both. I shall not waste words to prove that their functions are utterly incompatible.

Having shown you, then, that we have no reason for floor-ceilings wider than 15 or 20 feet, but that even these, to be rightly treated, involve considerations a great deal more than are dreamed of in your modern architect's philosophy,—I proceed to give you my simplest solution of them; or, at least, one free from the insuperable objection that I know attaches to others I have proposed, viz. that they exact a few minutes' thought from the applicant of them to each special case,—a very minute modicum, indeed, but still a modicum, of design, where he has hitherto been accustomed only to "specify."—a little bit of work for his own head that is now replaced by a good deal of the carpenter's. Improvements to be practicable now-a-days must, I am well aware, involve nothing of that sort,—not the smallest particle of work for those paid for it, that has passed into other hands. We have to design for "designers," who, as Mr. Braithwaite desires us to mark, have no "deliberate intention of doing damage," but merely "from want of knowing how to act," transgress the "code of taste" by getting their neighbours' money for knowing how; and though I fear I hold that "unlucky cant" which makes morality embrace these matters of taste, I fully agree with him as to the extravagant project (which I had not heard of before) of hedging them in with penal regulations, and think with him, we should endeavour to convince them (as we should Jack Sheppard) that their works tend to an injurious effect, and by no means "violently assail" them for innocently follow-